Wings of Decomposition: The Human Cocoon

by A. Gust

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A. Gust, A. Gustfix and A. Lê are pseudonym of Antonio Augusto Silva de Almeida.

Synopsis

It was not a disease.
It was not an invasion.
It was a harvest.

It all started with a smell. Something between damp rust and forgotten flesh. Something he tried to ignore, but that was already inside him — growing, pulsing, feeding.

The stain on his chest was not a tumor. It was a promise. Every dark thought, every unresolved guilt, every fear he buried alive in his own soul — all of it served as food. For years. Silently. Until the thing inside him became too large to remain hidden.

This is not a book about a monster that invades a body. It is about a man who cultivates a monster within himself. And when it no longer fits inside the shell that housed it since birth, something will open. And what emerges will not be beautiful. It will not be redemptive. It will be the materialization of everything he never wanted to face.

What are you feeding inside yourself?

CHAPTER 1 — THE SMELL

In the beginning, it was just a smell.

Nothing too strong.

Nothing that really called attention.

A faint odor... strange... hard to explain.

Something between damp rust... wet earth... and something more... something he couldn't identify.

Maybe it came from the street.

Maybe from some forgotten trash.

Maybe from the house itself.

He opened the window that morning... let the air in... and tried to ignore it.

But the smell did not disappear.

It seemed... to linger.

As if it were trapped in the air.

Or worse.

As if it were trapped in him.

* * *

During breakfast, he noticed something else.

The taste.

The bread seemed normal.

The coffee too.

But there was something strange at the back of his mouth... a metallic taste... faint... as if the air were contaminated by something invisible.

He drank more coffee.

The taste remained.

He swallowed.

The taste remained.

He frowned.

"Must be a cold..."

He said it to himself... as if the simple explanation were enough.

But something inside him... disagreed.

* * *

The day went on.

He showered.

Got dressed.

Left for work.

And the whole way there, he had the strange feeling that the smell was coming with him.

On the bus, he noticed something.

A woman sitting across from him wrinkled her nose.

A man behind him discreetly opened the window.

Another passenger covered his face with his sleeve.

He looked around... confused.

Were they smelling the same thing?

Or was it just coincidence?

* * *

At work, things got stranger.

While typing on his computer... he felt it again.

Stronger.

Not much.

But more present.

The smell seemed to rise through his nose slowly... like a bad memory.

He got up from his chair.

Smelled his own shirt.

Nothing.

Smelled his hands.

Nothing.
Went to the bathroom.
Washed his face.
Stared at the mirror for a few seconds.
His reflection looked normal.
Maybe a little paler.
But normal.
"Just my imagination..."
He murmured.

* * *

But when he returned to the office... he noticed something.
The coworker at the next desk leaned away slightly.
Another coworker opened the window.
A woman commented quietly to another:
"Did you smell that?"
"Yeah..."
"Smells like... something rotten."
He pretended not to hear.
But he heard.
Every word.
Every pause.
Every whisper.
His stomach tightened.

* * *

At lunchtime, he decided to check more thoroughly.
He went into the bathroom again.
Locked the door.
Took off his shirt.
Smelled the fabric.

Nothing.
Smelled his arms.
Nothing.
Smelled his chest.

* * *

He froze.
There it was.
Faint.
But unmistakable.
A smell of old flesh.
Of something left forgotten for too long.
He pulled his face away quickly.
His heart began to beat faster.
"No... it can't be."
He smelled again.
The odor came from somewhere... near his chest.
But not from the skin.
It seemed to come... from inside.

* * *

He raised his eyes to the mirror.
And for the first time, he noticed something.
Very small.
Almost nothing.
A dark stain.
Right in the center of his chest.
As if it were a shadow beneath the skin.
He leaned closer to the mirror.
Blinked a few times.
The stain was there.

Still.
Silent.
But strangely... deep.
As if something were hiding beneath the skin.
Waiting.

* * *

He touched the spot with his fingertips.
The skin was cold.
Too cold.
A chill ran down his spine.
He pressed a little harder.
Nothing happened.
No pain.
No reaction.
But the sensation was strange.
Very strange.
Like touching something... that should not be there.

* * *

He took a deep breath.
"Must be an infection..."
He said it, trying to convince himself.
But the smell continued.
Now more present.
Heavier.
Closer.
As if something inside him... were slowly beginning to rot.

* * *

He put his shirt back on.

Left the bathroom.
Returned to work.
But all afternoon... he couldn't stop thinking about the stain.
Or the smell.
Or the strange feeling that something inside his body... was changing.
Something silent.
Something hidden.
Something that still had no shape.

* * *

That night, when he got home... he went straight to the mirror.
Took off his shirt again.
The stain was still there.
But now it seemed...
A little larger.
Very little.
Almost imperceptible.
But larger.
He leaned closer to the mirror.
Felt the smell rise slowly through the air again.
Stronger.
Denser.
More real.
And for the first time... a thought crossed his mind.
A thought that made his stomach freeze.
What if...
it wasn't a disease?
What if...
something was truly growing inside him?

* * *

He stood looking at his own reflection for several minutes.

In silence.

Unable to explain why.

But with an increasingly clear feeling.

Something in there...

was beginning.

* * *

* * *

CHAPTER 2 — THE STAIN

He barely slept that night.

Whenever he closed his eyes... the smell returned.

Not exactly in the air.

But inside his head.

As if his brain had memorized that strange odor... and now repeated it in the silence of the early morning.

He tossed in bed.

Tried to ignore it.

Breathed deeply.

But there was something more disturbing than the smell.

The memory of the stain.

* * *

Just before dawn, he got up.

The house was silent.

The street too.

The only light came from the kitchen.

Yellow... faint... still.

He walked slowly to the bathroom.

Each step felt heavy.

As if some part of him... already knew what he would find.

He turned on the light.

The mirror revealed his tired face.

Sunken eyes.

Pale skin.

He took off his shirt.

And looked.

* * *

The stain was there.

But it was no longer the same.

For a few seconds, he stood still... trying to convince his own mind that it was just his imagination.

Maybe the light was different.

Maybe he was exaggerating.

But no.

The stain was larger.

Now the size of a coin.

Dark.

Irregular.

Like a small area of dead skin... hidden beneath the surface.

He leaned closer to the mirror.

And then he noticed something else.

Tiny veins around the stain seemed more visible.

Slightly darkened.

As if something inside there were... spreading.

* * *

He touched the spot again.

This time, he felt something strange.

Not pain.

But pressure.

A faint, deep sensation.

As if there were an empty space beneath the skin.

A space that hadn't existed before.

He pressed a little harder.

And for a second, he had the impression that something... responded.

An almost imperceptible movement.

Too small to be certain.

But enough to make his hand recoil.

* * *

"No..." he whispered.
His voice came out dry.
Weak.
The bathroom suddenly seemed smaller.
The air felt heavier.
And the smell... was stronger.
Much stronger.
Now he was sure.
The odor came from him.
From inside him.

* * *

He spent the rest of the morning trying to act normal.
Had coffee.
Got dressed.
Left for work.
But something had changed.
On the bus... people moved away more.
Two stops later, an elderly woman got up and changed seats.
A young man behind him murmured something to his friend:
"Dude... there's something rotten in here."
He felt his face heat up.
Looked out the window.
Pretended not to hear.
But he heard.
Every word.

* * *

At work, the situation worsened.

As soon as he entered the room, someone opened the window.
Another coworker commented:
"Are you smelling that?"
"Yeah... smells like a dead animal."
He felt his heart beat faster.
The smell was indeed stronger.
Much stronger.
He himself could now smell it clearly.
It was no longer a distant odor.
It was dense.
Heavy.
Sweet and rotten at the same time.
Exactly like decomposing flesh.

* * *

At lunchtime, he made an excuse and left early.
Went straight home.
He didn't want to be around anyone.
Didn't want to feel the stares.
Didn't want to hear any more comments.

* * *

As soon as he got home, he went straight to the mirror again.
Took off his shirt.
And stared.
The stain seemed even larger.
Maybe his imagination.
Maybe not.
But now there was something new.
At the center of the stain... the skin seemed slightly raised.
Like a small bump.

Almost like... a lump.
He touched it carefully.
Cold.
Very cold.
Colder than the rest of his body.
A chill ran down his spine.
He pressed again.
And this time... he was sure.
Something moved.
A minimal movement.
Slow.
But real.
As if something inside there had... adjusted.

* * *

He stepped back.
Breathing faster.
The mirror reflected his motionless body.
But his mind was in a panic.
"This can't be happening."
He repeated the phrase several times.
As if the words could stop it.
But the smell continued.
The stain continued.
And now there was something more.
A strange sensation inside his chest.
Not pain.
Not exactly.
It was more like... weight.
As if something were occupying new space... inside him.

* * *

He stood staring at his own reflection.
Trying to understand.
Trying to find some explanation.
Infection.
Tumor.
Some rare disease.
Anything.
Anything normal.
Anything that made sense.
But deep down... very deep...
an idea began to emerge.
Small.
Silent.
Frightening.
What if this...
wasn't a disease?

* * *

He looked at the stain again.
And at that exact moment... something happened.
A small movement.
Very fast.
Almost invisible.
But enough to make his heart stop for a second.
Something in there...
had just moved again.
And this time... it seemed a little stronger.

* * *

CHAPTER 3 — THE WEIGHT OF THOUGHTS

That night, he couldn't help it.

Thinking.

Thinking too much.

He sat on the couch... motionless... staring at nothing... while the smell slowly filled the room.

Now it was not just an odor.

It was almost a presence.

Heavy.

Thick.

As if something invisible were rotting in the air.

He tried breathing through his mouth.

It didn't help.

The metallic taste returned.

Stronger.

Almost sweet.

Almost rotten.

* * *

He ran his hand over his chest.

The stain was warm now.

Or maybe that was his imagination.

No.

It wasn't warm.

It was the opposite.

Cold.

So cold it seemed not to belong to the rest of his body.

He pressed the spot carefully.

And again felt it.

A movement.
Slower.
Heavier.
Like something... settling inside him.

* * *

"That's impossible..." he murmured.
But the word felt weak.
Without conviction.
Because something inside him... was already beginning to understand.

* * *

He tried to distract his mind.
Turned on the television.
Changed channels several times.
No image seemed real.
No sound seemed important.
Everything seemed distant.
The only thought that kept returning... always the same.
Something is growing inside me.

* * *

And then something strange happened.
When that thought arose...
the smell increased.
Not much.
But enough for him to notice.
He frowned.
Tried to ignore it.
Thought of something else.

Thought of work.
Thought of the bus.
Thought of normal things.
And slowly... the smell diminished.
He stood still.
His heart began to beat faster.

* * *

"No..." he whispered.
Then he decided to test it.
He thought again about the stain.
Thought about the thing moving inside him.
Thought about the rotting flesh.
Thought about something dead... growing inside his own body.
The smell returned.
Stronger.
Much stronger.
So strong he felt nauseous.
He quickly stood up and ran to the bathroom.
Vomited in the sink.
The metallic taste mixed with stomach acid.
When he finished... he lifted his head.
The mirror stared back at him again.
Pale.
Scared.
Sweating cold.

* * *

He took off his shirt.
And looked.
The stain seemed to pulse.

Very slowly.
Almost imperceptible.
But there was a rhythm there.
As if something were breathing.

* * *

He took a deep breath.
And tried again.
Thought of something bad.
Something really bad.
Thought of death.
Thought of bodies.
Thought of decomposition.
Thought of everything that disturbed him most.
The smell increased immediately.
Heavy.
Sweet.
Rotten.
The entire room seemed contaminated.

* * *

Then he did the opposite.
Tried to think of something good.
Of silence.
Of peace.
Of a calm place.
Of something light.
The smell diminished.
Slowly.
But it diminished.

* * *

He stood before the mirror.
Trying to understand.
And an idea began to form.
Strange.
Impossible.
But increasingly clear.
What if...
it wasn't the body?
What if...
it was connected to the mind?

* * *

He touched the stain again.
Felt something move.
Stronger.
As if it were reacting to the touch.
As if it were reacting... to him.

* * *

A new sensation arose.
Something between fear... and understanding.
What if it was growing... not just in the body?
What if it was growing... in his thoughts?

* * *

He looked again at the mirror.
His reflection looked normal.
But something in his eyes was different.
Something tired.

Something heavy.
Something dark.

* * *

And then a thought crossed his mind like lightning.
What if the smell...
wasn't of flesh?
What if the smell...
was of something far worse?

* * *

He breathed slowly.
Feeling the odor rise again.
Denser.
Stronger.
More inevitable.
And for the first time... a sentence formed clearly inside his head.
Perhaps...
what is rotting...
is not my body.
Perhaps...
it is my soul.

* * *

In the silence of the house...
the stain on his chest moved again.
This time... a little more.

* * *

CHAPTER 4 — THE SHADOW (PART I)

He took a few minutes to leave the bathroom.
The mirror was still there.
Waiting.
Silent.
As if it knew something he didn't yet understand.
When he finally opened the door... the smell came out with him.
Spread through the house slowly.
Heavier.
Denser.
He walked to the living room.
Sat on the couch.
Tried to breathe slowly.
But his mind wouldn't stop.
The sentence kept returning.
Perhaps... it is my soul.

* * *

He closed his eyes for a few seconds.
Tried to think of simple things.
But bad thoughts arose on their own.
As if some part of his mind were being pulled toward dark places.
Old memories.
Held grudges.
Jealousies.
Words he said... and regretted.
Things he did... and preferred to forget.
And every time one of those thoughts arose...
the smell increased.

* * *

He opened his eyes quickly.
"No..." he whispered.
But it was true.
Now he knew.
The thing reacted to the mind.
Something inside him fed on it.

* * *

He stood up.
Needed air.
Went to the kitchen and drank water.
His hands were trembling slightly.
When he finished... something caught his attention.
The kitchen light projected his shadow into the hallway.
But something was strange.
He took a step.
The shadow moved.
But it seemed to grow more than it should.
He frowned.
Took another step.
And then he noticed.
The shadow was not just longer.
It seemed... wider.
More open.
As if something invisible were occupying space behind him.

* * *

His heart began to beat faster.
He walked slowly back to the bathroom.

He needed to confirm.
Needed to look in the mirror.

* * *

The light was still on.
The faint light illuminated the room.
He entered.
Stood before the mirror.
His reflection looked normal.
Tired.
Scared.
But normal.
He took a deep breath.
Maybe he was imagining things.
Maybe it was just fear.
Maybe all of this was psychological.

* * *

Then he noticed.
The shadow.
Behind him.
In the mirror's reflection.
Something was wrong.
He moved slightly.
The shadow moved too.
But... there was something more.
Something large.
Something dark.
Something that seemed to be slowly opening.
He leaned closer to the mirror.
His heart now beat hard.

The shadow seemed to occupy half the wall.
But he was alone.
There was nothing behind him.
Nothing.

* * *

And yet... in the mirror...
the shadow looked different.
Wider.
Deeper.
As if two enormous dark shapes were moving slowly.
Opening.
Closing.
As if breathing.

* * *

A shiver ran through his entire body.
He didn't move.
Didn't breathe.
Didn't blink.
Just watched.
And then it happened.
For a single second.
The shadow expanded.
The two dark shapes opened completely.
Large.
Gigantic.
Like wings.
But they weren't really wings.
They were just shadows.
Impossible shadows.

Shadows that shouldn't exist.

* * *

He turned around quickly.
Nothing.
The wall was empty.
The bathroom was empty.
The house was silent.

* * *

He slowly returned his gaze to the mirror.
The shadow was normal again.
Small.
Simple.
Just his silhouette.
But the smell...
the smell was stronger than ever.

* * *

He touched his chest.
The stain seemed larger again.
And something inside it moved.
Stronger.
Heavier.
As if it were growing.
As if it were... preparing.

* * *

He stood there for several minutes.
Trying to understand.

Trying to accept.
But a new sensation arose.
Something he hadn't felt before.
A certainty.
Something inside him was changing.
Not just the body.
Not just the mind.
Something deeper.
Something that couldn't be seen... but could be felt.

* * *

He looked again at the mirror.
And this time, he noticed something else.
Very small.
Almost invisible.
But enough to freeze his blood.
The shadow behind him...
was not still.
It moved slowly.
Very slowly.
As if something there were... growing.

* * *

CHAPTER 4 — THE SHADOW (PART II)

He stood before the mirror.

Time seemed slower inside the bathroom.

The only sound was his own breathing.

Slow... heavy... uneven.

He tried to convince himself that it was just fear.

The human mind was capable of many things.

Hallucinations.

Illusions.

Suggestions.

Maybe he was imagining.

Maybe he was just tired.

Maybe...

But the smell continued.

Thick.

Almost sweet.

Almost unbearable.

* * *

He leaned closer to the mirror again.

He wanted to look carefully.

Wanted to be sure.

The light above trembled slightly.

The light cast small shadows on the walls.

His reflection looked pale.

His eyes were sunken.

Tired.

Scared.

But there was something worse.

Something behind him.

* * *

The shadow was there again.
Larger.
Darker.
Deeper.
He didn't move.
Watched.
Waited.
And slowly noticed something strange.
The shadow wasn't just still.
It seemed... to breathe.
Very slowly.
Expanding... and contracting.
As if it were alive.

* * *

His heart began to beat faster.
He raised his hand slowly.
In the mirror... the hand rose too.
The shadow imitated the movement.
But something in it was different.
Behind the arm's silhouette... something dark opened slightly.
As if the shadow had layers.
As if something larger were hidden inside it.

* * *

He swallowed hard.
The air felt heavy.
Dense.

Almost difficult to breathe.
And then a bad thought crossed his mind.
A cruel thought.
An old thought.
Something he had done years ago... and never told anyone.
In the same instant...
the smell increased.
Violent.
Rotten.
Almost suffocating.
And in the mirror... the shadow reacted.
It expanded.
The dark shapes behind him opened again.
Much larger now.
Gigantic.
Like two enormous dark extensions slowly unfurling in the air.

* * *

He stepped back.
Frightened.
The reflection did the same.
But the shadows...
took an extra second.
Just one second.
But it was enough.
He saw clearly.
Something there moved independently.
As if it weren't just his shadow.

* * *

"No..." he murmured.

His voice barely came out.

His heart was now beating so hard it seemed to echo in the bathroom.

He tried to think of something good.

Anything.

A quiet place.

A happy moment.

Something light.

And slowly... the smell diminished.

The shadow also seemed to shrink.

The dark shapes behind him closed again.

Returned to being just a common silhouette.

* * *

He was silent.

Trying to understand.

His mind spun.

Connecting the dots.

Bad thoughts.

Smell.

Movement.

Shadow.

The stain on his chest.

Everything seemed connected.

* * *

He touched the spot on his chest again.

The skin was cold.

Very cold.

But now there was something different.

Something more solid.

Something larger.
As if a small mass were growing inside there.
Something that didn't exist before.
Something that now seemed to occupy space.

* * *

He pressed lightly.
And again felt it.
A slow movement.
Deliberate.
As if something were settling.
Adjusting.
Learning the space where it was.

* * *

He recoiled.
The mirror reflected his expression of dread.
But there was something else in his eyes now.
Understanding.
A terrible understanding.
This was not just a disease.
Not just the body.
This seemed to respond to something deeper.
Something he carried inside him.
Something invisible.
Something that couldn't be touched.

* * *

He looked again at the shadow in the mirror.
It was normal again.
Small.

Simple.
Just his silhouette.
But for some reason...
he knew.
He knew it was still there.
Waiting.
Growing.
Watching.

* * *

He took a deep breath.
Tried to calm himself.
But at that moment...
something happened.
The light flickered.
Once.
Twice.
Three times.
The bathroom light weakened for a second.
And in that second...
the shadow behind him grew impossibly.
Gigantic.
Taking almost the entire wall.
The two dark shapes opened completely.
Much larger than before.
Much deeper.
And for an instant... he had the impression of seeing something in the center of that shadow.
Something that seemed... to move.
As if trying to get out.

* * *

The light returned to normal.

The shadow disappeared.

Returned to being just a common silhouette.

The bathroom fell silent again.

But the smell...

the smell was now stronger than ever.

And something inside his chest...

had just moved.

Stronger.

Heavier.

As if it were getting... larger.

* * *

CHAPTER 5 — THE DIAGNOSIS

The next morning... the smell was worse.

Much worse.

He woke up before the alarm.

Not because he wanted to.

But because his body itself woke him.

The odor was so strong it seemed to be inside his nose... inside his throat... inside his head.

It was impossible to ignore.

He opened his eyes slowly.

The room was still dark.

The faint light of dawn came through the gaps in the window.

He lay still for a few seconds... trying to understand if it was real.

He took a deep breath.

And immediately regretted it.

The smell of decomposition filled his lungs.

Heavy.

Sweet.

Rotten.

Like something left forgotten for too long.

* * *

He sat up in bed.

His head was heavy.

His body felt tired... as if he hadn't slept at all.

The first thing he did was bring his hand to his chest.

The stain.

He could still feel its presence.

Like a cold weight beneath the skin.

Something that shouldn't be there.

* * *

He got up slowly.
Walked to the bathroom.
Each step felt heavier than normal.
As if something inside him were taking up space.
As if something were... growing.

* * *

When he turned on the bathroom light... he hesitated.
For a few seconds, he avoided looking at the mirror.
He knew he would have to look.
But part of him was still afraid.
Afraid of what he might find.
Finally, he raised his eyes.
And looked.

* * *

His reflection was there.
But something seemed different.
Not just the tiredness.
Not just the paleness.
There was something strange in his gaze.
Something heavy.
Something dark.
As if a part of him were... disappearing.

* * *

He took off his shirt.
And looked at his chest.
The stain was now clearly larger.

The size of a palm.
Dark.
Irregular.
As if something were pressing against the skin from inside.
But the worst was the volume.
Now there was a small elevation.
A relief.
As if something were indeed growing inside there.

* * *

He touched it.
The skin was cold.
Almost freezing.
And when he pressed lightly...
something responded.
A slow movement.
But much stronger than before.
There was no longer any doubt.
That thing was alive.

* * *

He recoiled quickly.
His heart beat hard.
His hands began to sweat.
"This can't be happening..." he murmured again.
But now the phrase sounded useless.
Because it was real.
He could feel it.
Could see it.
Could smell it.

* * *

It was at that moment that he made a decision.
He needed to see a doctor.
Needed to hear a rational explanation.
A disease.
A tumor.
Anything.
Any diagnosis that made sense.
Anything that didn't involve... that thing.

* * *

A few hours later, he was sitting in the clinic waiting room.
The smell followed him.
He knew it.
Because people were reacting.
A woman discreetly changed seats.
A man next to him wrinkled his nose.
A child asked her mother:
"Mom... what's that smell?"
The mother looked around, embarrassed.
He lowered his head.
His heart beat heavy in his chest.

* * *

When they finally called his name... he entered the office.
The doctor seemed calm.
Experienced.
A gray-haired man with an attentive gaze.
"What are you feeling?"
He hesitated for a moment.

How to explain that?

"Doctor... there's something wrong with me."

The doctor gestured for him to continue.

"I smell something... coming from me."

The doctor frowned slightly.

"A smell?"

"Yes... like... like something rotting."

The doctor noted something on paper.

"How long?"

"A few days."

"Any other symptoms?"

He took a deep breath.

Then lifted his shirt.

"This."

The doctor leaned in to look.

For a few seconds... he was silent.

Observing the stain.

Touched it lightly.

The cold skin seemed to surprise him.

But soon his expression returned to normal.

"Strange."

He picked up a small flashlight.

Examined more closely.

The stain seemed deep... dark... almost as if it were beneath several layers of skin.

"Does it hurt?"

"No."

"Itch?"

"No."

"Grow fast?"

"Yes."

The doctor noted again.

Then leaned back in his chair.
"Let's run some tests."

* * *

A few hours later... the results were ready.
The doctor returned to the room with papers in his hands.
He looked confused.
Very confused.
"Your tests are... normal."
"Normal?"
"Yes."
"But... and this?"
He pointed to his chest.
The doctor looked again.
"No sign of infection."
"No tumor."
"No necrosis."
He frowned.
"In fact... biologically... your body appears completely healthy."
Silence took over the room.
The smell seemed stronger there.
Much stronger.

* * *

"But doctor... I feel it moving."
The doctor looked directly at him.
"Perhaps it's just a muscular sensation."
"No."
"I feel it."
He pressed the stain lightly.
And at that exact moment...

something moved.
Strongly.
So strongly that the doctor himself noticed.
The skin deformed slightly for a second.
The two fell silent.
The doctor blinked.
Incredulous.
"That... was a spasm."
But his voice no longer sounded so sure.

* * *

The man put his shirt back on.
The smell seemed to fill the office.
Heavier.
More intense.
And then the doctor asked a strange question.
"Tell me something..."
"Yes?"
"Have you been having... very negative thoughts lately?"
He froze.
"Why?"
The doctor hesitated.
"Because... sometimes... the body reacts to psychological states."
"But that doesn't explain..."
He pointed again to his chest.
The doctor remained silent.
Without an answer.

* * *

When he left the clinic... the sensation inside his chest felt different.
Heavier.

More alive.
And as he walked down the street...
something strange happened.
A woman passing by stopped suddenly.
Looked back.
Directly at him.
But not at his face.
Behind him.
As if she were seeing something.
Something large.
Something dark.

* * *

She stepped back.
Frightened.
And murmured almost voicelessly:
"What... is that shadow?"
His heart stopped for a second.
Very slowly...
he began to turn around.

* * *

CHAPTER 6 — THE SHADOW OTHERS SEE

He began to turn slowly.

His heart was beating so hard it seemed to echo inside his head.

The woman was still standing on the sidewalk.

Her eyes fixed on him.

But not exactly on him.

She looked at something behind him.

Something he couldn't see.

"What… is that shadow?" she repeated.

Her voice came out low.

Frightened.

He finished turning.

There was nothing.

The street was normal.

Cars passing.

People walking.

An ordinary afternoon.

But when he looked back at the woman… she was still pale.

Confused.

As if trying to understand what she had just seen.

"Ma'am… what did you see?"

She hesitated.

Looked again behind him.

And took another step back.

"I… I don't know…"

"It looked… large."

"As if something were… opening behind you."

A chill ran through his entire body.

His throat went dry.

Because he already knew what she had seen.
The shadow.

* * *

He didn't answer.
Just started walking.
Faster now.
The smell seemed to follow him down the street.
Some people looked discreetly.
Others wrinkled their noses.
But he could no longer think about that.
He could only think about it.
If other people were seeing it...
then it wasn't imagination.
Wasn't madness.
It was really there.
Growing.

* * *

When he got home... the first thing he did was go to the bathroom.
Turned on the light.
The mirror was silent.
Waiting.
He stood before it.
Breathing deeply.
And then he looked.
His reflection looked worse.
Paler.
His eyes sunken.
His skin seemed cold.
Almost grayish.

He slowly lifted his shirt.
The stain now occupied almost the entire center of his chest.
Dark.
Irregular.
And the volume was larger.
Much larger.
As if something inside were pressing against the skin from within.

* * *

He leaned closer to the mirror.
The shadow appeared behind him again.
Wider.
Deeper.
And now it didn't seem like just a shadow.
It seemed like something... alive.
Something that expanded slowly.
As if two enormous invisible structures were opening behind him.

* * *

He took a deep breath.
And then something happened.
A bad thought crossed his mind.
A cruel thought.
A thought he had tried to forget for years.
In the same instant...
the smell became unbearable.
Heavy.
Almost solid.
And the shadow in the mirror reacted.
It opened.
Gigantic.

Taking the entire wall.
Two enormous dark shapes expanded slowly.
Much larger now.
Much more distinct.
As if something were indeed growing behind him.

* * *

He gripped the sink.
His heart racing.
"Stop..." he murmured.
Tried to think of something good.
Tried to calm down.
But it was too late.
Something inside his chest moved again.
Much stronger.
Much more violent.
The skin visibly deformed.
As if something were pushing from inside.

* * *

He fell to his knees on the floor.
The pain appeared for the first time.
An absurd pressure in his chest.
As if something were trying to force its way out.
As if something were... being born.
"No..."
His voice came out weak.
The pain increased.
He brought his hand to his chest.
And felt.
Something hard.

Something large.
Something alive.
Moving beneath the skin.

* * *

In the mirror... the shadow behind him was now enormous.
Gigantic.
Taking the entire bathroom wall.
The dark shapes expanded slowly.
Opening.
Closing.
Like wings.
But still invisible.
But something had become clear.
That thing was not just part of him.
It was learning.
Learning to exist.
Learning to move.
Learning to grow.

* * *

He touched his chest again.
The stain was warm now.
For the first time.
Warm.
Like something alive.
And inside...
something moved again.
Stronger.
Heavier.
As if making space.

Preparing something.
Preparing a way out.

* * *

He looked at the mirror.
And for the first time... a certainty arose.
This wouldn't stop.
This wouldn't disappear.
It would keep growing.
Until the moment it no longer fit inside him.
And on that day...
something would finally come out.
Something that had been inside his own soul all along.

* * *

CHAPTER 7 — THE SMELL OF THE SOUL

That night... he couldn't sleep.

Not really.

His body tried to rest... but his mind remained awake.

Always alert.

Always waiting for the next movement inside his chest.

He lay in the dark.

The room silent.

But the smell... the smell was there.

Stronger than ever.

It seemed to have invaded everything.

His clothes.

The sheets.

The walls.

The very air.

It was a sweet and rotten smell at the same time.

Like spoiled fruit.

Like forgotten flesh.

Like something dead... that still breathed.

* * *

He turned to his side.

Closed his eyes.

Tried to think of something else.

But one bad thought crossing his mind...

and the smell worsened.

It was almost instantaneous.

As if the thing reacted to his thoughts.

As if it were connected to something deeper.

Something not physical.

* * *

He began to notice a pattern.
When he remembered good things... the smell diminished.
When dark thoughts arose... the odor became unbearable.
As if his mind were feeding the thing.
Or perhaps...
revealing it.

* * *

He got out of bed.
His chest felt heavy.
The pressure inside him seemed greater now.
He walked to the bathroom again.
Turned on the light.
The mirror waited for him.
Always the mirror.
Like a silent witness to everything.

* * *

He lifted his shirt.
The stain was now enormous.
Dark.
Almost black.
The relief beneath the skin was even more evident.
As if something large were pressing against the inside of his chest.
Something that grew slowly... but without stopping.

* * *

He touched it.
And immediately felt the movement.
This time it wasn't subtle.
It was clear.
Something shifted inside there.
Slowly.
Heavy.
Like a creature trying to adjust to the space where it lived.

* * *

He took a deep breath.
And then decided to test something.
Closed his eyes.
Tried to remember a happy moment.
A moment from childhood.
Something simple.
The smell diminished.
Slowly.
But it diminished.

* * *

Then he did the opposite.
Thought of something bad.
Something cruel he had done in the past.
Something he always tried to ignore.
The smell exploded in the room.
Violent.
Suffocating.
And at that instant... something inside his chest moved with force.
So strong he had to lean on the sink.

* * *

He opened his eyes.
In the mirror... the shadow behind him was enormous.
More defined.
Clearer.
Now it really seemed to possess two large structures open in the air.
But they were not ordinary wings.
They were like enormous dark surfaces...
irregular...
organic...
almost like membranes of something gigantic.
Something ancient.
Something still forming.

* * *

He noticed something else.
The shadow didn't move exactly with him.
It breathed.
Slowly.
Expanding... contracting...
As if something were gaining strength there.

* * *

He stepped back.
And at that moment, he heard a strange noise.
A crack.
Coming from his chest.
Not from the skin.
From inside.
Like something making space between bones.

He brought his hand to his chest immediately.
The skin seemed thinner now.
More stretched.
As if something large were pressing from inside out.

* * *

The fear was different now.
Not just fear of dying.
It was fear of something being born.
Something that shouldn't exist.

* * *

He returned to the bedroom.
Sat on the bed.
Trying to understand.
Trying to connect everything.
The thoughts.
The smell.
The shadow.
The movement.
Everything pointed in the same direction.
An impossible direction.

* * *

"The soul..." he murmured.
The word came out alone.
Almost without realizing.
And at that moment, something made sense.
Something horrible.
Something disturbing.
What if it wasn't the body rotting?

What if it was... something deeper?

* * *

What if it was the soul itself?

* * *

He began to remember things.
Things he never wanted to revisit.
Small cruelties.
Small lies.
Small meannesses.
Nothing that seemed large in isolation.
But together...
they formed something heavy.
Something dark.
Something he had carried for years.

* * *

The smell increased again.
Very strong now.
Almost unbearable.
He realized that the more he thought about these things...
the more that thing inside him grew.

* * *

So he quickly stood up.
Went to the mirror again.
Needed to see.
Needed to be sure.
When he looked...

he almost fell backward.
The shadow behind him now occupied the entire wall.
Gigantic.
Monstrous.
The two enormous dark structures opened slowly.
But they didn't look like wings yet.
They looked like something still forming.
Something caught between two states.
Between shadow... and matter.

* * *

He watched in silence.
His heart beating hard.
And then something even worse happened.
The shadow was no longer completely attached to him.
It was... pulling away.
Just a few centimeters.
But it was enough.
As if it were beginning to separate.
As if it were beginning to exist on its own.

* * *

He stood still.
Without breathing.
The mirror reflected everything.
The silent room.
The heavy smell in the air.
The gigantic shadow behind him.
And inside his chest...
something moved again.
Much stronger.

Much more determined.
As if it were approaching the final moment.
The moment when it would no longer fit inside him.
The moment when something...
would finally come out.

* * *

CHAPTER 8 — THE COCOON

The early morning was heavy.

The silence in the house seemed deeper than ever.

He was sitting on the floor of the room... leaning against the wall... breathing slowly.

His chest rose and fell with difficulty.

Each breath seemed to displace something inside him.

Something large.

Something alive.

Something that was no longer just growing.

It was preparing.

* * *

The smell had taken over the entire house.

It was no longer just an odor.

It was a presence.

Thick.

Almost tangible.

As if the air had rotted along with him.

He looked at his own hands.

The skin seemed paler.

The veins darker.

Everything about him seemed emptier.

As if some part of him were being consumed.

* * *

He brought his hand slowly to his chest.

The surface of the skin was different.

Stiffer.

More stretched.

As if something were pushing from inside.
When he pressed lightly...
he felt it again.
A movement.
Slow.
But powerful.
It no longer seemed like a simple displacement.
It seemed like... expansion.
As if something were making space.
As if something were opening structures that had been folded.

* * *

He closed his eyes.
Tried to calm down.
But his mind began to think.
Bad thoughts.
Dark thoughts.
Old memories.
And immediately the smell intensified.
Making the air almost impossible to breathe.

* * *

Then he noticed something even stranger.
Each dark thought seemed to provoke a physical reaction.
Something inside him moved.
Something inside him... fed.

* * *

He opened his eyes quickly.
"No..."
The word came out almost as a whisper.

If that thing really reacted to thoughts...
then it was connected to something deeper.
Something invisible.
Something that had always been there.

* * *

He stood up with difficulty.
His legs trembled.
Walked slowly to the mirror again.
Always the mirror.
As if that object had become a portal.
A window into something he didn't want to see.

* * *

He turned on the light.
And looked.
His reflection seemed even more distant now.
His eyes were sunken.
His face thinner.
As if something were slowly draining his life.
But it wasn't just that.
The shadow behind him was enormous.
Gigantic.
Filled almost the entire wall.
But now there was something new.
Something even more disturbing.
The shadow seemed... to pulse.
Slowly.
Like a living organism.
Expanding... contracting...
Like an enormous black heart breathing in the space behind him.

* * *

He leaned closer to the mirror.
Watching.
Trying to understand.
And then he saw something that made his blood freeze.
Inside the shadow... there were shapes.
Folded shapes.
Curved structures.
As if something were curled up there.
Something gigantic... still closed.
Like a body waiting to open.

* * *

He stepped back.
His heart racing.
"A... cocoon..."
The word arose in his mind.
And at that moment, everything seemed to fall into place.
The stain on his chest.
The growth.
The smell.
The shadow.
Everything.
It was as if something had been developing inside him.
Something that needed time.
Something that needed to grow.
Until the moment it opened.

* * *

What if that was exactly what it was?

A cocoon.
But not of flesh.
Not of tissue.
A cocoon made of soul.

* * *

The thought crossed his mind like lightning.
And immediately something inside his chest moved violently.
He fell to his knees.
The pain returned.
Stronger.
Deeper.
As if something were opening structures inside him.
Making space.

* * *

In the mirror... the shadow reacted.
It expanded violently.
The enormous folded shapes inside it moved.
Slowly.
Like something preparing to awaken.

* * *

He pressed his chest tightly.
Feeling something push against his skin.
Something large.
Something that no longer fit there.

* * *

Then... for the first time...

he felt an even worse sensation.
Something stretching inside him.
Something opening.
Something that seemed like... wings.
But not on his back.
Not like in the movies.
That thing was folded inside his chest.
Trapped.
Curled.
Waiting.

* * *

He began to breathe fast.
Panic rising.
"This... isn't possible..."
But his body said otherwise.
The pressure increased.
The skin seemed thinner.
As if it would tear at any moment.

* * *

He raised his eyes to the mirror again.
And at that instant, something happened.
The shadow behind him slowly opened the gigantic structures that had been folded.
Now it was clear.
Those were wings.
Enormous.
Monstrous.
But still made only of shadow.
Still caught between two worlds.

Between existence... and birth.

* * *

His heart beat even harder.
And a terrible understanding finally arrived.
That thing was almost ready.
Almost complete.
Almost prepared to come out.

* * *

And he understood something even worse.
It wasn't trying to kill him.
It was trying to be born.

* * *

And when it was finally born...
it wouldn't come out through the back.
Wouldn't come out as something beautiful.
It would come out through the only place where it truly existed.
Through the center of his chest.
Through the place where the soul itself dwells.

* * *

He fell forward... bracing his hands on the floor.
Feeling something enormous move inside him.
Stronger than ever.
More alive than ever.
Like a creature about to break through its own human cocoon.

* * *

CHAPTER 9 — THE WEIGHT OF WINGS

The pain did not disappear.

It just changed.

Before it was a deep pressure... a sensation of something growing inside him.

Now it was different.

Now it seemed like... expansion.

As if something were slowly opening.

As if gigantic structures were being stretched for the first time.

* * *

He remained on the floor of the room.

Breathing irregular.

His chest rising and falling with difficulty.

Each movement seemed to displace that thing inside.

Something heavy.

Something too large for a human body.

* * *

The smell was unbearable.

It was no longer just the odor of something rotten.

Now there was something different.

Something denser.

More ancient.

As if that smell also carried... something spiritual.

Something corrupted.

* * *

He tried to get up.
His legs trembled.
But he managed to stand.
Walked slowly to the mirror again.
As if he were forced to see.
As if a part of him needed to follow the process.
Even knowing it would destroy him.

* * *

When he looked at his reflection... he barely recognized himself.
His eyes were dark.
Sunken.
His skin seemed cold.
Almost lifeless.
But the worst was on his chest.
The stain now covered almost the entire center of his torso.
Dark.
Irregular.
As if the skin were becoming something different.
Something thinner.
Something no longer fully human.

* * *

He touched it.
And immediately felt it.
Something enormous moved.
Opening.
Unfolding.
As if two large structures were being stretched for the first time.

* * *

He sucked in air with force.

The sensation was absurd.

As if something occupied much more space than should exist inside a human body.

* * *

In the mirror... the shadow behind him reacted.

Now it wasn't just large.

It was monstrous.

The wings were completely open.

Gigantic.

Took almost the entire wall of the room.

But they were not ordinary wings.

They were irregular.

Organic.

Like enormous black surfaces made of living shadow.

* * *

He noticed something new.

The wings were not still.

They moved slowly.

As if learning to move.

Learning to exist.

* * *

He stepped back.

And at that instant, he felt something strange in his back.

Not pain.

Not movement.

But... weight.

An impossible weight.

As if something enormous were connected to him.
But not physically.
Something that existed... in another layer.
Another reality.

* * *

He tried to turn his body quickly.
Looked behind.
Nothing.
Just the room.
The wall.
The silence.
But when he returned his eyes to the mirror...
the wings were still there.
Moving slowly.
As if breathing.

* * *

His heart raced.
"Is that... me?"
The question came out in a low voice.
But the answer seemed clear.
That thing was part of him.
Or perhaps...
part of what he had become.

* * *

He looked again at his chest.
The skin seemed to pulse.
Slowly.
As if something inside were pressing more and more.

As if the body were becoming too small for that thing.

* * *

He closed his eyes for a moment.
But his mind didn't help.
Bad thoughts kept arising.
Memories.
Guilt.
Fears.
And each thought seemed to feed that thing.
Like fuel.
Like food.

* * *

The smell increased again.
Stronger.
Heavier.
And immediately something inside him reacted.
A violent expansion.
He fell against the wall.
Panting.
Feeling something gigantic open inside his chest.

* * *

In the mirror... the shadow wings expanded even more.
Now they touched the ceiling.
Spread across the walls.
Took all the space behind him.
Like a gigantic creature trapped inside the dimension of shadows.

* * *

He began to understand something.
Something terrible.
It wasn't just growing.
It was becoming strong.
Becoming large.
Preparing to fully exist.

* * *

He raised his eyes again.
And for the first time, he noticed something even worse.
At the center of that gigantic shadow...
there was a body.
Still curled.
Still compressed.
But now visible.
Something that looked like an enormous dark insect.
Still trapped.
Still waiting.
Like something that hadn't finished being born yet.

* * *

His heart almost stopped.
Because at that moment, he realized something impossible.
The shadow wasn't just imitating his body.
It was showing what existed inside him.

* * *

He looked at his own chest again.
And at that instant, he felt something stretch violently inside.
As if two enormous folded structures were being forced to open.
Something was getting too large.

Too large to remain hidden.

* * *

He fell to his knees again.

The pain was now real.

Deep.

As if his own body were being transformed into something that shouldn't exist.

* * *

In the mirror... the creature inside the shadow moved for the first time.

A slow movement.

But clear.

As if it were awakening.

As if it felt that the moment was coming.

* * *

He tried to breathe.

But the air seemed too heavy.

His chest seemed too full.

As if his body were becoming just a shell.

A cocoon.

A temporary container.

* * *

And at that instant, a terrible certainty took over his mind.

It was almost ready.

Almost complete.

Almost prepared to break through.

And when it finally broke through...

not much of him would remain.
Because what would come out...
would not just be a creature.
It would be his own soul...
finally transformed.

* * *

CHAPTER 10 — THE TEAR

He fell forward... bracing his hands on the floor... feeling something enormous move inside him.

Stronger than ever.

More alive than ever.

Like a creature about to break through its own human cocoon.

He tried to get up.

But his legs wouldn't obey.

His body trembled.

His sweaty hands pressed against the cold floor.

The smell was now unbearable.

Thick.

Heavy.

As if the air itself had rotted along with him.

* * *

Then came the first crack.

A dry sound.

Small.

But impossible to ignore.

He froze.

His breathing stopped for an instant.

The sound had come from inside him.

* * *

Another crack.

This time clearer.

Like something rigid being forced open.

Like folded structures being stretched.

* * *

He brought both hands to his chest.
The skin was hot.
Tense.
Too stretched.
As if something pressed from beneath.
As if something were pushing the very flesh outward.

* * *

"No..." the word came out weak.
Almost breathless.
But inside his chest... something responded.
A violent movement.
Something large moved.
Something that was no longer just alive.
It was ready.

* * *

He slowly raised his eyes.
The mirror was still there.
Reflecting everything.
And when he saw his reflection...
terror took over his entire body.
The shadow behind him was no longer just a shadow.
It was gigantic.
Took almost the entire wall.
The wings were completely open.
Immense.
Monstrous.
Like two black structures made of pure darkness.

But now they weren't just open.
They trembled.
Vibrated slowly.
Like something about to beat for the first time.

* * *

He looked again at his own chest.
The skin now pulsed.
Visibly.
Expanding... contracting...
Expanding... contracting...

* * *

Then came the pain.
A deep pain.
Brutal.
As if something were tearing structures from within.
He screamed.
His entire body curled.
His hands pressed his chest hard.
But there was no way to stop it.
That thing could no longer be contained.

* * *

Another crack echoed.
Louder.
Stronger.
Like a bone breaking.
But there was no bone.
It was something different.
Something that was being opened.

* * *

He raised his eyes again to the mirror.

And at that instant, he noticed something even more terrifying.

The stain on his chest was moving.

Slowly.

As if something beneath were pressing against the skin.

Pushing.

Testing the limits of the body.

* * *

His heart raced.

Each beat seemed to push that thing closer to the surface.

Closer to the exit.

* * *

"This can't be..."

But the phrase died in his throat.

Because at that moment, the skin on his chest stretched impossibly.

Something large pressed from within.

Something enormous.

Something folded.

Something that was slowly opening.

* * *

He fell to his side on the floor.

Breathing irregular.

His entire body shaking.

The smell now seemed unbearable.

Like something dead was finally being exposed.

* * *

Then it happened.
A tear.
Small.
Almost silent.
But real.

* * *

The skin at the center of his chest opened slightly.
A thin line.
Dark.
Moist.
As if the body were opening on its own.

* * *

His eyes widened.
Unable to believe.
Unable to move.
The line expanded.
Very slowly.
Like a fissure.
Like a crack in something being pressed from within.

* * *

In the mirror... the shadow wings trembled violently.
As if they had felt the moment.
As if they knew.

* * *

The tear grew a little more.
The skin began to separate.
Millimeters.
But enough.
Enough for something inside to breathe.

* * *

He felt it.
Clearly.
Something moving just below the opening.
Something large.
Something alive.
Something finally finding its way out.

* * *

His chest expanded again.
As if his entire body were being used for a single purpose.
Open.
Release.
Allow the birth.

* * *

In the mirror... the shadow creature began to move.
Slowly.
Unfolding its own body.
Detaching from the forms that held it.
Like a being that had been curled up for so long... finally awakening.

* * *

He tried to scream again.
But there was no voice.
Only broken breathing.
Only the sound of his own flesh giving way.

* * *

And then something pressed against the tear.
From inside out.
Something hard.
Something cold.
Something that was beginning to emerge.

* * *

The skin opened a little more.
Millimeters.
But enough to show that thing... could no longer go back.

* * *

The human cocoon was finally giving way.

* * *

CHAPTER 11 — THE BIRTH

The tear in his chest remained there.

Small.

But alive.

Opening slowly.

As if the body itself had accepted its fate.

As if that flesh no longer fought against what was happening.

* * *

He lay on the floor.

His face pale.

His eyes wide.

Air entering and leaving irregularly.

Each breath made the tear move.

Opening a little more.

Giving way a little more.

* * *

Something inside him pressed.

Something large.

Something that seemed folded... compressed... squeezed into too small a space.

* * *

Then came another crack.

Louder.

Deeper.

Like something rigid finally freeing itself from a prison.

* * *

He felt it.
Clearly.
Something sliding inside his chest.
Something repositioning itself.
Like a gigantic body trying to find space to get out.

* * *

In the mirror... the shadow reacted.
The creature inside the shadow was now fully visible.
Enormous.
With a long, dark body.
And two gigantic structures folded around itself.
The wings.

* * *

But they weren't fully open yet.
Still compressed.
Trapped.
Waiting.

* * *

The tear on his chest opened more.
Now it was not just a line.
It was an irregular opening.
Red.
Moist.
Trembling with each internal movement.

* * *

He brought his hand to his chest.

But stopped before touching.

Because he felt something pushing from inside.

Something hard.

Something cold.

Something that definitely should not exist inside a human body.

* * *

Then it happened.

The first part appeared.

Very slowly.

Pushing outward.

Something dark.

Shiny.

Like a smooth... moist surface.

* * *

He couldn't breathe.

The world seemed distant.

Unreal.

As if everything were happening inside a nightmare from which he could not wake.

* * *

That thing kept emerging.

Forcing the tear to open more and more.

The flesh giving way.

Stretching.

Tearing.

* * *

The sound was terrible.
Small tears.
Small cracks.
Like fabric being slowly ripped.

* * *

In the mirror... the shadow opened its wings for the first time.
Slowly.
Immense.
Filling the entire wall.
Like two enormous black surfaces made of night.

* * *

On the floor... his body trembled.
The pain was absurd.
But there was something even stronger than pain.
A sensation of release.
As if something were finally fulfilling its purpose.

* * *

More of the creature appeared.
Now it was possible to see a larger structure.
Curved.
Dark.
Something clearly not human.

* * *

He tried to scream.
But his voice didn't come out.
Only a weak sound.

Almost a sigh.

* * *

The tear was now large.
Too large.
The open skin revealed something that seemed to move slowly.
Something enormous.
Something that had grown inside him all that time.

* * *

Then the creature moved with more force.
Pushing.
Forcing.
And his body arched violently.

* * *

A heavy sound echoed inside his chest.
Like something freeing itself.
Like something detaching from its last connections.

* * *

And then... it happened.
The creature finally came out.
Not all at once.
But enough that it was impossible to deny.
An enormous form emerged from the center of his chest.
Dark.
Shiny.
With folded structures that slowly began to open.

* * *

In the mirror... the shadow wings beat once.
Slowly.
As if testing their own strength.

* * *

On the floor... the human body was almost motionless now.
The chest completely open.
The tear enormous.
The creature kept coming out.
Dragging itself out of the flesh cocoon.

* * *

And when the wings finally began to open...
the entire room seemed to darken.
Because they were gigantic.
Much larger than the human body that had housed them.

* * *

The wings extended slowly.
Black surfaces.
Deep.
As if made of darkness itself.

* * *

The creature finally rose.
Still connected to the body.
But almost free.
Almost complete.

* * *

And at that instant... something strange happened.

It stopped.

As if listening to something.

As if noticing something for the first time.

* * *

Then it moved its head slowly.

And looked at the mirror.

* * *

The reflection no longer showed a man.

It showed only the creature.

Enormous.

Black.

With open wings occupying almost all the space behind it.

* * *

And at that instant, a final understanding crossed the mind that still remained in that human body.

That thing had not been born inside him.

It had always been there.

Waiting.

Growing.

Feeding on every dark thought.

On every guilt.

On every fear.

* * *

Until it finally became large enough.

To be born.

* * *

CHAPTER 12 — WINGS OF DECOMPOSITION

Silence took over the room.

A heavy silence.

Deep.

Almost supernatural.

* * *

The human body was on the floor.

Motionless.

Empty.

The chest completely open.

The flesh torn like a cocoon that had finally broken apart.

What was once a man now seemed only an abandoned structure.

A shell.

A used container.

* * *

In the center of the room... the creature rose slowly.

Still wet.

Still covered by traces of the grotesque birth that had just happened.

Its body was long.

Dark.

Shiny like something newly released from a damp, deep place.

* * *

The wings were open.

Gigantic.

Much larger than anything that human body could have housed.
They moved slowly.
Heavy.
As if learning to exist.
Learning to balance in the world.

* * *

The creature breathed.
If that could be called breathing.
A slow movement ran through its body.
Like something awakening after a very long sleep.
Very ancient.

* * *

It turned its head slowly.
Observing the room.
The furniture.
The walls.
The darkness.
Everything seemed small.
Everything seemed fragile.

* * *

Then its eyes fell on the floor.
On the body.
On what remained of the man.
The creature stood still for a few seconds.
Observing.
As if trying to remember something.
As if a distant memory still existed there.

* * *

But there was no longer any connection.
No feeling.
No identity.
That body was just matter.
An ancient human cocoon.
Nothing more.

* * *

The wings moved again.
Slowly.
And a deep sound echoed through the room.
A heavy beat.
Deep.
Like the sound of something very large displacing air.

* * *

The wind generated by that movement ran through the entire room.
Papers fell from the table.
The curtain moved.
The door trembled slightly.

* * *

The creature lifted its body a little more.
Testing its own strength.
Testing its own weight.
Feeling the gigantic structure of its wings respond to its command.

* * *

Another beat.
Stronger.
Firmer.
Now the movement seemed natural.
As if it had always been part of it.
As if those wings had always existed.
Waiting only for the moment to open.

* * *

The creature walked slowly.
Silent steps.
Light.
But carrying something deep.
Something ancient.

* * *

It stopped before the mirror.
The same mirror that had witnessed everything.
The disease.
The rot.
The growth.
The birth.

* * *

Now the reflection showed only it.
The creature.
Enormous.
With black wings open behind its body.
Like two extensions of darkness itself.

* * *

It stood watching.
Without emotion.
Without human thought.
But something inside it seemed to understand.
Seemed to recognize.

* * *

What had been born was not just a monster.
It was something deeper.
More symbolic.
More inevitable.

* * *

Because that creature had not been created.
It had been cultivated.
Fed.
For years.
Inside a human being.

* * *

Every dark thought.
Every guilt.
Every silent hatred.
Every fear not faced.
Every rotten desire hidden inside the mind.
All of that had fed something invisible.
Something small.
Something that began as a simple larva inside the soul.

* * *

And now... it had become that.

* * *

The creature moved away from the mirror.
The wings moved again.
Much larger now inside that small space.
The room seemed unable to contain it.

* * *

It walked to the window.
The glass reflected the night outside.
A silent city.
Houses.
Distant lights.
People sleeping.

* * *

The creature tilted its head slightly.
As if observing.
As if noticing something no human could notice.

* * *

Because now it could feel.
It could feel something in the world.
Something spread out.
Something present everywhere.

* * *

Other cocoons.

* * *

Other souls.

* * *

Other larvae growing silently inside people.
Fed the same way.
Growing the same way.
Waiting.

* * *

The creature opened its wings completely.
The room darkened under its shadow.

* * *

Then it beat its wings.
Once.
The window glass cracked.

* * *

Again.
The glass shattered.

* * *

The creature crossed through the opening.
Disappearing into the night.

* * *

Outside... it rose slowly.

The black wings cutting through the air.
Gigantic against the dark sky.

* * *

And as it moved away from the house... something seemed to spread through the air.
Something invisible.
Something light.
Small.

* * *

Particles.
Spores.
Tiny shadows.

* * *

Things that floated silently through the city.
Through the night.
Through the houses.
Through the people.

* * *

Tiny seeds of something that did not yet exist.
But that one day would exist.

* * *

Because all over the world...
millions of people carried within themselves thoughts that slowly rotted.

* * *

And inside those souls...
new cocoons were beginning to form.
Silently.
Patiently.

* * *

Waiting for the day when they too would be ready.
To finally open.

* * *

END OF BOOK

* * *

Also by A. Gust

Wings of Decomposition: The Human Cocoon
Wings of Decomposition II: Other Cocoons
The Flesh of Forgetting: The Weight of the Dead
Echoes of Madness: The Court of Plagues
THE INVENTORY OF UNLIVED LIVES --- The Archive of the Never Born